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Liquidating the Palestine Mandate

BY DAVID H. POPPER

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Liquidating the Palestine Mandate

BY DAVID H. POPPER

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The Palestine problem arises from the clash of Jewish and Arab nationalist aspirations in an area of strategic importance for Britain. The remarkable success of the Jewish National Home, which has been of the greatest economic assistance to the Arabs, has strengthened their conviction that desperate measures must be taken to prevent Jewish domination of an Arab territory. An Arab terrorist machine, never suppressed by the local government, has intransigently demanded cessation

of Jewish immigration and of land sales to Jews, as well as an Arab government. The Palestine Royal Commission proposal to divide the country into a Jewish and an Arab State and a British mandated area bristles with difficulties. Before creating petty nationalist states which would be dominated by the British, Britain should make every effort to stamp out Arab terrorism and encourage moderates on both sides to seek a more rational basis for cooperation.

THE PARTITION of Palestine—suggested by the Palestine Royal Commission as the most promising solution for the existing deadlock in the Holy Land—was brought nearer fruition when the British government announced on October 21 that at the close of current disturbances a second commission would be appointed to make a detailed study of the project.¹ Despite the unenthusiastic attitude of reserve adopted by the Jews, the League of Nations and the British Parliament, the fate of the plan rests primarily in the hands of the Chamberlain cabinet. The United States has already signified that its intervention would be limited to the protection of American interests on a basis of equality with those of other governments and their nationals.² Neither the desire of Poland and other Eastern European countries to retain an outlet for their Jewish populations, nor the objections of the Arabs of Palestine and the neighboring countries is likely to sway the British government if it is fully determined to effect partition. It should be remembered, however, that the approval of the British Parliament and the Council of the League of Nations must still be obtained before the scheme can be put into operation.

A lasting settlement of the Palestine dispute is hampered by the strong but conflicting claims of Arabs and Jews to an area of only 10,400 square miles. Both assert rights of possession by prescription, although the Arabs have for centuries been the most numerous inhabitants. Palestine's character as a Holy Land for three great world religions, however, complicates any attempt to dispose of the problem on this basis. Both peoples have also based their hopes on somewhat ambiguous pledges made by the British to win support in the World War, although here the Jewish case appears the stronger. The promise to the Arabs to recognize their independence in an ill-defined area of which they understandably believed Palestine was a part—embodied in a letter of October 24, 1915 from Sir Henry McMahon, then High Commissioner in Egypt—has been repeatedly described by the British as not inclusive of the area west of the Jordan.^{2a}

The commitment to the Jews, set forth in the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 and elab-

1. *New York Times*, October 22, 1937.

2. Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Correspondence with the United States Government regarding United States Rights in Palestine*, United States No. 2 (1937), Cmd. 5544 (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1937), p. 4.

2a. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, Cmd. 5479 (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1937), p. 20 (hereafter cited as *Royal Commission Report*); W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, in Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, *Official Report*, vol. 326, no. 149, July 21, 1937, cols. 2248-49. Sir Henry has himself stated that this was the case, in a letter to *The Times* (London), July 23, 1937. The text of the "McMahon pledge" was first published officially in the *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 18, 19. For the Arab claim, cf. *Palestine and Transjordan* (Jerusalem), August 14, 1937, pp. 1, 5, 7.

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orated by the terms of the mandate itself, pledges Britain to facilitate "the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people" without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish population. This objective has been approved by the League of Nations and the United States. Yet the Arabs see no reason why they should recognize as valid a mandate and an alien dominion imposed on them without their consent. The fact that Palestine, the only Arab territory not yet definitely on the road to independence, constitutes but a small fraction of the area promised to the Arabs after the war, while it represents all for the Jews, is cold comfort to those Arabs who inhabit it. It does not allay their fear that they will be overwhelmed by a wave of new settlers implanting an alien way of life.

Reasons for which all three parties concerned must share the blame have made it difficult to achieve the close cooperation necessary for the peaceful colonization and development of an already populated territory. Smoldering Arab opposition to the National Home has flared up recurrently since 1920.^{2b} Arabs denounce the very existence of the mandate and call for its termination; urge abandonment of the experiment of the Jewish National Home; seek complete stoppage of Jewish immigration and sales of Arab land to Jews; and demand national independence, a treaty of alliance with Britain, and the establishment of self-governing institutions in Palestine.³ With equal constancy the Zionist Organization exhorts the mandatory power to fulfil its undisputed duty of facilitating the development of the National Home. The rate of immigration, it claims, should be determined only by the country's economic absorptive capacity. Provided the economic condition of Arab cultivators is not aggravated, no restrictions should be placed on the sale of land to Jews. Representative institutions of government, which would at present contain Arab majorities, should not be established except on the basis of "parity"—equal representation for both peoples irrespective of the present or future ratio between their numbers.⁴

The tension produced by these diametrically opposed national aspirations has been heightened by the impact of external events on the situation in Palestine itself. The movement for Arab independence received a powerful stimulus from the

successful outcome of similar campaigns in near-by countries. If their brethren in Iraq, Syria and Egypt were worthy of freedom, why were not the Arabs in Palestine? It was thought that Britain, preoccupied by diplomatic combat in the Mediterranean with an Italian government styling itself "protector of Islam," would long hesitate before arousing the ire of the Arab world by harsh treatment of its Palestinian segment. The opportunity for acquiring independence, moreover, was fading as the growth of the Jewish population rapidly increased. Jews, harried in Germany, Poland, and various Eastern European countries, were pouring into Palestine in unprecedented numbers. The Jewish population of the territory had all but doubled since mid-1933.⁵

Poised uncomfortably between and above two protesting groups, the British administration has incurred widespread suspicion in its attempt to occupy a middle ground. Indeed, some Jewish spokesmen maintain that such a course is itself the greatest obstacle to understanding between the two peoples. They are convinced that Arab nationalism in Palestine is a creature of terrorist activity directed by a few *effendi* who oppose the development of the National Home because it has cost them the spoils of Oriental political office and threatens to destroy all possibility of continued exploitation of the Arab agricultural masses. Only a firm stand, some authorities argue, is needed to break the nationalist bubble. This contention overlooks the increasing hold of Arab nationalism, particularly upon the young, and the unwillingness of even the Arab moderates to cooperate in carrying out the terms of the mandate.

The Arabs' conviction that pacific opposition to the National Home was fruitless because of preponderant Jewish influence at London and Geneva was, according to Arab sources, the fundamental factor leading to the outbreak of the most serious and prolonged disturbances with which the mandatory has yet had to cope.⁶⁻⁷ Sporadic violence following the murder of two Jews on April 15, 1936 rapidly developed into a comprehensive Arab general strike. Ten days later all Arab political groups—including the rival Husseini and Nashashibi factions whose bitter struggle for political and religious leadership in Palestine had been a bar to Arab solidarity—united in what became known as the Arab Higher Committee, under the leadership of Haj Amin el Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem. While the Jews stood aside, a virtual Arab rebel-

5. *General Monthly Bulletin of Current Statistics of Palestine*, July 1937, p. 1.

6-7. Cf. Emile Ghory, "An Arab View of the Situation in Palestine," *International Affairs* (London), September-October 1936, pp. 684ff.

2b. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 43-95.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

4. Cf. testimony of Dr. Chaim Weizmann, in Great Britain, Colonial Office, Palestine Royal Commission, *Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions*, Colonial No. 134 (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1937), pp. 30-39 (hereafter cited as *Minutes of Evidence*); *Royal Commission Report*, p. 143.

lion ensued; acts of terrorism intimidated Arab moderates; guerrilla bands which included volunteers from Syria and Iraq swooped down from the hills to attack British forces. The relatively mild repressive steps taken by the government had little effect. All efforts for mediation between the government and the Arabs were blocked by the impasse on Jewish immigration. Unless this immigration were halted—a step which would constitute a violation of Britain's duty under the mandate—the Arab Higher Committee refused to end the strike.⁸ It was only when the British government finally announced its intention to send strong re-enforcements, in September, that the outbreak began to subside. On October 11 the Arab Higher Committee, which had maintained contact with the Arab sovereigns, published the text of identic appeals for peace from King Ibn Saud of Arabia, King Ghazi of Iraq, and the Emir Abdullah of Trans-Jordan.⁹ Accepting this convenient opportunity for retreat, the Arabs ended the disturbances.

The Jews, the Permanent Mandates Commission, and the British Royal Commission have agreed that the outbreak might well have been quelled at its inception by firmer measures and an announced insistence on carrying out the terms of the mandate regardless of external pressure. For years some critics have regarded British policy as weak, indeterminate, and subject to unforeseen fluctuations which might at times be induced by resort to violence.¹⁰ Important mitigating factors, however, may be cited in defense of the Palestine administration: its natural distaste for a policy of outright repression; the attempt, now proved a failure, to carry conciliation of the Arabs to the farthest possible limits; the need for observing a mechanical impartiality in the administration of a somewhat ambiguous mandate;¹¹

and the crippling effect of constant and vociferous criticism from Jews, Arabs and League experts. Taking a broad view of the growth of the National Home, it must be admitted that a rough balance between Arab and Jewish aspirations has been maintained.

PROGRESS UNDER THE MANDATE

The progress of the territory from an economic and social point of view is attested by a sharp increase in population, which had remained stationary under the Turkish administration, from 752,000 in 1922 to 1,336,578 today. Of this total the Arabs, who numbered 650,000 in 1922, now constitute 942,000, while the Jewish population has grown from 83,000 to over 400,000—30 per cent of the aggregate.¹² The root cause of this development is the application of successive increments of imported Jewish capital to meet the country's needs as immigration occurs. An economic upswing, following a depression between 1926 and 1929, assumed boom proportions when the number of new settlers reached 30,327 in 1933; 42,359 in 1934; and 61,854 in 1935.¹³ Eleven per cent of these immigrants were admitted as "capitalists"—possessors of at least £1,000.¹⁴ For the first time Palestine appeared to be less an experiment subsidized by philanthropy than a going concern. Government revenue, which amounted to £3,015,917 in the year ended March 31, 1933, had risen to £5,770,457 three years later. Imports were stimulated by the influx of capital, much of which was spent for foreign durable goods useful in the upbuilding of the country. Standing at £7,768,920 in 1932, they reached £17,853,493 in 1935, while exports rose simultaneously from £2,381,491 to £4,215,486.¹⁵ Other important economic indices also registered sharp rises.¹⁶ The unsettlement caused by the Italo-Ethiopian war checked the economic advance in the autumn of 1935; in 1936 the strike hampered commercial activity; and the current uncertainty retards business enterprise. Nevertheless, the relative stability of Palestine's economy, despite a rapid decline in immigration since 1935 under these adverse circumstances, points to the

8. In 1921 Jewish immigration was halted, and in 1929 drastically reduced after the disturbances. League of Nations, Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes of the Thirty-second (Extraordinary) Session Held at Geneva, July 30-August 18, 1937* (C.330.M.222.1937.VI, Geneva, 1937), p. 48. Hereafter cited as Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes*.

9. Text in *Royal Commission Report*, p. 101. For detailed account of disturbances, cf. Great Britain, *Report by H. M. Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan, 1936*, Colonial No. 139 (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1937), pp. 5ff. Hereafter cited as *Report of the Mandatory Power, 1936*.

10. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 110, 112, 140; Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes*, p. 228.

11. The principle of proportionality is extended to the utmost lengths in filling official posts, employing labor for public works, allotting expenditures for education, and in virtually every realm of government activity. Disputes over the bases of computation and narrow deviations from the rule provoke jealous antagonism. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 137ff.

12. *General Monthly Bulletin of Current Statistics of Palestine*, September 1936, p. 1; *Report of the Mandatory Power, 1936*, pp. 59, 234ff. The bulk of the Jewish increase is attributable to immigration; perhaps nine-tenths of the growth of the Arab population is natural.

13. There were 29,727 Jewish immigrants in 1936. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

14. Chiefly Germans. Most of the other immigrants were Polish. The Jewish Agency estimates that Jewish capital investments in the four years 1932-1935 totaled £30,000,000. *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 76-78; *Royal Commission Report*, p. 212.

15. *Report of the Mandatory Power, 1936*, pp. 187ff, 253.

16. *General Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, July 1937, p. 45.

conclusion that the country's development has on the whole been sound.

Two factors in the economic position of the territory, however, are disquieting. While capital imports have thus far been of the greatest assistance, they cannot permanently finance the increasing merchandise imports necessary for a growing population. An outflow of funds, always a possibility, might have serious results. Exports, visible and invisible, will have to be increased to place the country's international accounts on a more stable basis.¹⁷ While many light industries have been established in Palestine under a protective tariff régime—annual industrial output increased 84 per cent to a total of £7,000,000 between 1929 and 1935—exports of manufactured goods have not advanced commensurately.¹⁸ The second adverse factor in the economic situation is the tendency toward monoculture and a single-crop export. In 1935 shipments of citrus constituted 84 per cent of the export total.¹⁹ Foreign sales rose from 4,498,241 boxes in the 1932-1933 season to approximately 10,200,000 in 1936-1937, and trees already planted will eventually produce 25 million boxes annually.²⁰ Difficulties are already being met in marketing the crop abroad.

Despite the instability caused by these factors, Palestine's economic future appears reasonably bright, barring internal political conflict or a catastrophe such as a Mediterranean war. To offset the lower wage costs of its neighbors, who are also sheltered by protective tariffs, the territory possesses labor and management of uncommon skill and quality. In all probability, moreover, its location athwart the trade routes linking Europe and the Near East will make it a base for economic penetration of the entire hinterland.²¹

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Under the guidance of the Jewish Agency, the world Jewish organization empowered by the mandate to advise and cooperate with the government, and the Va'ad Leumi, the governing body of the Palestine Jewish community, the Jews have

been indisputably successful in stimulating the growth of the National Home. Their achievement is based on three factors: increased population, a Jewish investment of £77,000,000 in the country since 1918,²² and the ownership of approximately 1,300,000 *dunums* (quarter acres) of land, half of which has been acquired since the British occupation. Of this area slightly more than 1,000,000 *dunums*—or 12 per cent of the government's estimate of the "cultivable area" of the country—is regarded as "cultivable" by the authorities.²³ The Jewish holdings are, however, concentrated for the most part in the more fertile plains extending along the coast and inland through the Plain of Esdraelon.²⁴ Agricultural settlements now number 203, with a population of over 97,000, of whom 55,000 are land workers.²⁵ But agricultural development, necessarily a slow, difficult process, has been outstripped by urban growth stemming from the desire to provide the largest possible immediate refuge for European Jews and to confront the Arabs with a more compact, defensible Jewish area. Tel Aviv, the Jewish metropolis, now numbers 150,000 inhabitants as against 15,000 in 1922.²⁶ Of Jerusalem's population of 125,000, 76,000 are Jews; Jews constitute one-half the 100,000 inhabitants of Haifa as well. Nevertheless, industrialization cannot yet be said to have outgrown its rural base.²⁷

With the support of Jews abroad the Jewish community has built up an impressive social structure of its own. In literature, music, scientific research and general cultural achievement its advance has been remarkable. The Va'ad Leumi and the municipal councils have been permitted, subject to general government control, to levy taxes and maintain social services.²⁸⁻³⁰ Practically every Jewish child receives a primary education and many attend secondary schools, while only 20 per cent of the Arab children are educated. Similarly, in the field of health, the Arabs rely very largely on the relatively incomplete government services and to some extent on proffered Jewish facilities, whereas the Jews maintain their own organizations.³¹

22. *Royal Commission Report*, p. 115.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 114; *Report of the Mandatory Power*, 1936, pp. 85, 86; *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 18. On the dispute over Palestine's cultivable area, cf. E. P. MacCallum, "Great Britain and the Race Problem in Palestine," *Foreign Policy Reports*, August 29, 1934.

24. *Royal Commission Report*, map No. 4.

25. *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 101.

26. *Great Britain and the East*, September 9, 1937, p. 59.

27. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 114, 115.

28-30. Cf. budget of the Va'ad Leumi, in *Report of the Mandatory Power*, 1936, pp. 61, 62.

31. The government spends about £180,000 annually for health purposes; the Jewish organizations, about £318,000. *Minutes of Evidence*, cited, p. 13.

17. Total domestic exports in 1936 were more than £300,000 less than the cost of food, drink and tobacco imports alone. *Royal Commission Report*, p. 213.

18. "Prospects of Industrial Exports," *Palestine Review* (Jerusalem), September 17, 1937, p. 392.

19. Virtually half the 300,000 *dunums* (quarter acres) devoted to the production of citrus fruits is in Arab hands. *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 41.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 43; Jewish Agency for Palestine, *Memorandum on the Development of the Jewish National Home*, 1936, Submitted by the Jewish Agency for Palestine to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations for the information of the Permanent Mandates Commission, June 1937 (London, 1937), p. 22.

21. Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Great Britain and Palestine, 1915-1936* (New York, Oxford, 1936), pp. 73ff.

It will be noted that the Jewish community apparently has as its goal a National Home in which the Arab plays only a minor or incidental part. Nationalism—Jewish, not Palestinian—is the guiding impulse in communal activity. It is emphasized in the schools and the assiduous cultivation of the Hebrew language. It is evident in the Jewish demand that government expenditures for public services be distributed to Jews and Arabs in proportion to their numbers—a demand which, sincerely urged because the Jewish minority contributes over 60 per cent of the revenue, presupposes the existence of two distinct communities.³² It can be seen in the restiveness of the Jewish population under the British administration, which is regarded as an alien bureaucracy and suspected of pro-Arab sympathies. The same phenomenon, moreover, appears in the labor policy of the Jews, with whom the Arabs, to their bitter resentment, can find employment only when Jewish labor is absolutely unavailable. This exclusiveness is defended on the ground that it opens the way for additional immigrants; that it permits Zionists to enjoy the spiritual values inherent in development of their own nation with their own hands; that the use of cheaper Arab labor would force Jews to concentrate in occupations regarded as parasitical by anti-Semites; and that the resultant decline in immigration would induce an economic recession affecting both Jewish and Arab economy.³³ Nevertheless, these circumstances go far to explain the Arabs' fear that they will be swamped by the incoming tide of Jewish immigration.

THE ARABS AND THEIR GRIEVANCES

The success of the National Home has been of material assistance to the Arabs of Palestine. They have devoted a sizeable share of the profits from the sale of land to the planting of citrus groves and to general agricultural improvements. Funds have been invested in new Arab industries. The rapidly increasing population has not only enjoyed the benefits of Jewish reclamation and health enterprises but has in part been absorbed in the citrus areas and the towns, where wages are high.³⁴ Government services for the improvement of social and agricultural conditions, made possible by the Jewish contribution to public revenue, have raised the standard of life to a point far above that of other Arab countries.³⁵ But the advantage

32. Jewish Agency for Palestine, *Memorandum on the Development of the Jewish National Home, 1936*, cited, pp. 50, 51. In a single community it is customary for the wealthier section to bear more than a proportionate share of the tax burden.

33. *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 38, 53ff., 61-65, 97, 98, 110.

34. *Royal Commission Report*, p. 127.

gained by the Arabs as a result of Jewish activities will presumably be diminished in the future. The Jewish community, forewarned by its experience during the disturbances, is seeking to lessen its reliance on Arab labor.³⁶ The purchasing power of the Arabs tends to be decreased by the protective tariff policy. Arab labor would doubtless be the first to suffer in a depression.

It would appear, none the less, that a permanent setback to the National Home would severely injure the economic fabric of Arab life. But the nationalist movement is a political phenomenon, which retains a grip on the populace as a whole despite its indifference to economic considerations.³⁷ Two factors—the credulous, easily excited nature of the uneducated *fellah* (cultivator) and the existence of a "comprehensive political machine" headed by the Arab Higher Committee—have facilitated the growth of nationalist fervor. Dominated by the Mufti of Jerusalem, the Committee controlled a strident press, a militant "Youth Movement," the apparatus of terrorist intimidation, and the revenues and propagandist powers accruing from supreme command of Moslem religious affairs and funds.³⁸ Government-operated schools, moreover, like their Jewish counterparts, implant strong nationalist sentiments in Arab youth. The establishment of mixed Jewish-Arab schools conducted in English, which might possibly have improved inter-racial relations, would run counter to Article XV of the mandate, granting each community the right to maintain its own schools in its own language.

Perhaps the most serious friction among the Arab organization, the Jewish community and the government arises from the sharp dispute with regard to immigration. The British administration, enjoined under the mandate to "facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions" without prejudice to the rights and position of the non-Jewish community, has since 1922 applied the test of "economic absorptive capacity" to de-

35. Cf. tabular comparison, *ibid.*, p. 403.

36. As a result of the strike of citrus laborers and the closure of the Arab port of Jaffa in 1936, the Jews have reduced the proportion of Arab citrus laborers on their plantations from 60 to 40 per cent and have constructed a cargo port of their own at Tel Aviv. *Ibid.*, p. 240; *Report of the Mandatory Power, 1936*, pp. 57, 61.

37. Cf. Arab National League, *Whither Palestine? A Statement of Facts and of Causes of the Arab-Jewish Conflict in the Holy Land* (New York, Arab National League, 1936), p. 14.

38. The Mufti was until October 1, 1937 entrenched as head of the Supreme Moslem Council of Palestine. The relatively moderate National Defense party, led by Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, resigned from the Arab Higher Committee but publicly seconded the Mufti's policy of intransigent opposition both to the National Home and to partition. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 132, 174ff; *Report of the Mandatory Power, 1936*, pp. 38-43.

termine the number of foreign laborers admitted to the country.³⁹ Since this statistical estimate involves a complex calculation in which an appraisal of prospects for future development plays an important part, the totals reached by relatively detached and cautious officials have recently fallen far short of those deemed equitable by the Jews. Fearful of the consequences of mushroom development, the government finds it impossible to accept unreservedly the Jewish contention that immigration itself, by expanding both capital resources and demand, constitutes "the main factor that expands" economic absorptive capacity.⁴⁰ Zionists have complained that the scarcity of Jewish labor threatened the economic stability of the territory; that illicit immigration of both Jews and Arabs demonstrated the inadequacy of the government's labor schedule; and that measures including the creation of a special frontier control force should be taken to prevent illegal entry. Despite these criticisms, it is believed that the existence of 6000 Jewish unemployed at the end of 1936 proves the government's caution to have been justified. The trend toward overdevelopment of urban life and industry without an assured market, as well as the territory's sensitiveness to political developments in the Mediterranean area, are further factors in support of the official position.⁴¹

If the rate of immigration is the most immediate of Palestine's problems, the dispute over the right of the Jews to purchase land is probably the most fundamental. Without a firm base on the land, intensively tilled by a Jewish peasantry, supporters of the National Home can never feel securely established in Palestine.⁴² Under the mandate the government must encourage close settlement of the Jews in the countryside, without injury to the rest of the population. Unfortunately Palestine, with its dry and heavily deforested land area of only 26,000,000 *dunums*, is a restricted agricultural territory.⁴³ The rural population may nevertheless be substantially increased by the widespread introduction of scientific, intensive cultiva-

tion, the full use of surface and sub-surface water for irrigation, and the reclamation of swamp and dune areas.⁴⁴ It is maintained that the small Arab cultivator, by selling part of his land, may free himself from his crushing burden of debt—his greatest problem—and invest the balance of the purchase price in the development of the remainder of his land. A far-reaching change of this type, however, requires large capital resources and years of unremitting effort. Its efficacy rests on the education of the *fellaheen* to fit them for the difficult operations of modern intensive farming, and on the degree to which they can and will reduce their debts and invest surplus funds in land improvement. Generally speaking, irrigation and close settlement must be confined to the plains areas; little can be done in the congested hill districts, peopled almost exclusively by Arabs.

It is the Jewish contention that government efforts to protect the Arab cultivator have failed to achieve their object, and that too little has been done to facilitate close settlement on the land.⁴⁵ The series of government ordinances adopted for the protection of Arab cultivators has in fact encouraged obstructive delays in the settlement of title disputes, and thus unduly complicated the process of land purchase.⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ Jews admit the government's responsibility to protect the *fellaah*, but point out that its efforts to aid Arabs forced from the land by Jewish purchases have disclosed the existence of only a relatively small number whose condition was injured thereby. Many have been absorbed in the enlarged Palestinian labor market, and the condition of the Arab masses in general has undoubtedly been improved under the mandatory régime. Nevertheless, the government, confronted by a rapidly increasing population, has maintained a cautious view of development possibilities which are still in part mere hopes. It can scarcely be censured for exercising the greatest care to preserve the rights of Arab tenants and is justified in limiting land purchases to the plains, where intensive cultivation is feasible. The administration, burdened by large expenditures for public security and attempting to follow a conservative financial policy, does not believe it could prudently have taken much more extensive steps than those already adopted to rationalize and reduce land taxes, facilitate rural cooperatives, and encourage land development.

39. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 297, 298.

40. *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 52ff; *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 285ff.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 294-301; *Report of the Mandatory Power, 1936*, p. 135.

42. Arabs bitterly assail restrictions on the disposal of Jewish-owned land to non-Jews and on the employment of Arab labor in its use.

43. Zionists have never relinquished the claim that Trans-Jordan, closed to Jewish immigrants by the British in 1922, forms part of the National Home. A scheme for the resettlement of Palestinian Arabs in Trans-Jordan to provide additional land for Jews has also been suggested by Jewish writers. Cf. A. Granovsky, *The Land Issue in Palestine* (Jerusalem, Keren Kayemeth Leisrael, 1936), p. 77.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 74ff; Jean Gottmann, "The Pioneer Fringe in Palestine," *Geographical Review* (New York), October 1937, p. 550.

45. *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 133-74.

46-47. For provisions of ordinances, cf. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 222-25; for criticism of the government's policy, *ibid.*, pp. 227, 242.

A third specific problem of primary importance has been created by the government proposal for establishment of a legislative council, a measure preparatory to the "development of self-governing institutions" enjoined by the mandate. As far back as 1923 the Arabs had blocked British efforts to set up either a central representative body or an Arab Agency as a counterpoise to the Zionist Organization. Cooperation, they felt, would imply acquiescence in the mandatory régime. The matter remained dormant for a decade, until the present High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wauchope, revived the legislative council project in a new form. The proposed body was to exercise the usual legislative functions, subject to veto by the High Commissioner, who might also legislate by ordinance without its consent and determine the labor immigration schedules. Consisting of five officials, and eleven nominated and twelve elected members, the council would have been preponderantly Arab. Opposed for this reason by the Jewish community—the Arabs remained noncommittal—the project was finally abandoned because of parliamentary opposition in London based on its shortcomings. But the fact that the Jewish case received far fuller statement than that of the Arabs strengthened the Arab conviction that only desperate measures could halt the progress of the National Home.⁴⁸

THE ROYAL COMMISSION PROPOSALS

It was to investigate such problems as these and to recommend remedies for legitimate grievances that the British government, on May 18, 1936, announced that a Royal Commission would be sent to Palestine.⁴⁹ The bulk of the Commission's report was devoted to an evaluation of the work of the British administration, a survey of grievances, and formulation of a set of recommendations to improve the functioning of the régime. The partition plan received only brief and tentative consideration.

After full discussion of the Arab grievances the Commission came to the conclusion that, while sincere, they were not in general justified under the terms of the mandate. On the other hand the Jewish complaints, particularly with respect to the administration's failure to preserve public security, were made the basis of a long series of suggestions designed to ameliorate the prospects for peace under the existing system. The most important of these provided that:

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 357ff.

49. For its terms of reference, cf. *Royal Commission Report*, p. ix. The report was published July 7, 1937.

1. To counter charges of dilatory executive action, alleged ignorance and pro-Arab sympathies on the part of officials, as well as inefficient judicial procedure, the government should be decentralized; officials of doubtful loyalty or impartiality should be dismissed at once; British administrators should not be routine colonial officials but should be specially selected and trained, and stationed in the territory for at least seven years; additional British judges and a British chief government prosecuting attorney should be appointed.

2. To end government toleration of subversive activities, particularly those of the Mufti of Jerusalem, elections should be arranged for the Supreme Moslem Council and the power of its president decreased. An enlarged Arab Agency including representatives from neighboring countries, and comparable to the Jewish Agency, might be considered.

3. The land issue should be dealt with by permitting close settlement of the Jews in the plains districts, preferably under large-scale schemes executed by public utility companies with governmental assistance. Communal holdings should be parcellated; interspersed Jewish and Arab holdings should be consolidated by government action. The hill districts should be retained by Arabs except in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Land survey and the settlement of title disputes should be expedited, and irrigation possibilities energetically explored.

4. Taking account of political, social and psychological factors, the British government should lay down a "political high level" of total Jewish immigration, fixed for the next five years at 12,000 per annum. At this figure, the annual Arab population increase would exceed that of the Jews.⁵⁰

5. To find markets for citrus and other exports, the mandate should be amended to permit the conclusion of reciprocity treaties.

6. If new disorders occur, martial law should be applied at once. Arabs and then Jews should be disarmed. Punishment should be more prompt and adequate than in the past. The press should be more rigorously controlled.

By restricting immigration and settlement on the land, these recommendations would temporarily crystallize the National Home in its present area and at the general stage it has now reached. At the same time a test would be afforded for the widely held contention that energetic administration, coupled with firm repression of the autocratic Arab terrorist organization, would pave the way for the cooperation of Arab moderates in making the mandatory régime a success.

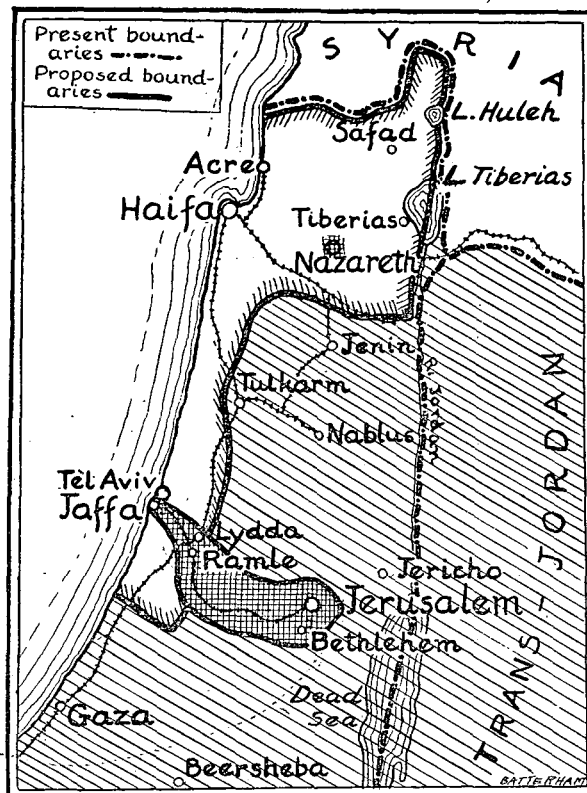
The Royal Commission, however, characterized its own suggestions as mere palliatives of dubious value. Now that an "irrepressible conflict" has arisen between the two communities, it felt, peace can be maintained under the existing system of government only by force. Even a scheme of

50. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

"cantonization," under which two or three federal cantons would be autonomous in such matters as immigration, land sales and social services while the mandatory power would control foreign relations, defense, customs and similar subjects would not be feasible. Under such an arrangement, neither side would have attained its political aspirations and both would regard the central government, which would be responsible for the maintenance of law and order, as an alien and interfering body. Minorities would exist in each area.⁵¹

Confronted by what it regarded as a deadlock, the Commission boldly declared the mandate unworkable and sought to advance the prospects for peace by proposing to narrow as far as possible the extent of the contact between Jews and Arabs. Its solution of the problem envisages the partition of the territory into three political entities: a Jewish State in the north and west, comprising about one-fifth of Palestine but including a high proportion of Jewish-owned rural land and a Jewish majority; an Arab State formed by a union of Trans-Jordan and the balance of Palestine; and a British area under permanent mandate consisting of a corridor from Jerusalem to the sea.

The existing mandate is to be terminated and replaced by treaties of alliance similar to the basic instruments which established the independence of Syria and Iraq. Strict guarantees for minority rights are to be included. British imperial interests are to be fully safeguarded by military conventions providing for the maintenance of armed forces in the territory, the use of ports and communications facilities, and the security of the oil pipe line from Iraq to Haifa.⁵² Britain's permanent mandate is to include not only Jerusalem and Bethlehem but Nazareth and Lake Tiberias as well. In the Jewish area the "mixed" towns of Haifa, Acre, Tiberias and Safad are to be retained under British administration for an indefinite period. Jaffa, though an enclave within the British corridor, is to form part of the Arab State. The treaties are to include provisions for free transit across the three areas from port cities, including Akaba on the Red Sea—another point maintained under British mandate. In return for the acquisition of sovereignty in a district larger than that which the Jews have already settled, and for freedom from their present liability to taxation for the welfare of the Arabs, the Jewish State is to pay a subvention to the Arab State, its size to be fixed by a finance commission. The British government, too, is to grant it £2,000,000. While each unit is to determine its own tariffs, a commercial



Partition as proposed by the Royal Commission: the shaded area indicates a portion of the Arab State; the squared area, the British mandated territory; and the section within the heavy black line, the Jewish State.

convention will be concluded to establish common rates of duty wherever possible. Britain is to collect all tariffs, remitting them to the states for which imports are destined. A joint port is to be established at Jaffa and Tel Aviv, with Britain holding the casting vote in its control. Guarantees are to be given for the development and security of industries such as the Dead Sea potash concession and the Jordan electric power plant, Jewish enterprises which will fall within the boundaries of the Arab State. Meanwhile, during the transitional period before the new régime goes into effect, Jews should not be permitted to purchase land or settle in the Arab area.⁵³

The principal difficulty inherent in this solution of the problem is the question, not so much of the Jewish minority of 1250 in the Arab State, as of the 225,000 Arabs living in a single community with 258,000 Jews.⁵⁴ The Commission recommends a Draconian transfer of the Arab minority but admits that the extent to which lands in the Arab area can be developed to support an additional

51. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 377-79. For the advantages of such a scheme, cf. Archer Cust, "Cantonisation: a Plan for Palestine," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, vol. 23 (1936), p. 206.

52. For the significance of such conventions, cf. D. H. Popper, "Strategy and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean," *Foreign Policy Reports*, June 1, 1937.

53. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 380-93.

54. The 75,000 Jews in Jerusalem, the 50,000 in Haifa, and those in the other towns over which the mandatory retains control are not residents of the Jewish State.

population is still unknown. Since no surplus of land now exists in the Arab State, an immediate investigation of irrigation and development potentialities is suggested. If possible, the Arabs should be resettled, under British supervision and in the last resort by compulsion, with the British taxpayer financing the scheme.

Under this plan, as the Commission and the British government have pointed out, Zionists realize their dream of an independent Jewish State unencumbered by irksome restrictions on immigration. The Arabs attain a political status comparable to that of their neighbors, together with a guarantee of their holy places and financial aid for national development.⁵⁵ Freed from the fear of domination by an alien majority, both groups may recognize that their interests should be complementary; the subsequent relaxation of tension may open the door for greater Jewish immigration, first in the Jewish State and ultimately in all the Arab countries, than would be practicable under present conditions. For the British as well as the Jews, partition may be the prelude to better relations with the entire Moslem world.⁵⁶

Acting with an appearance of great resolution, the British cabinet immediately signified that it would support the proposal for partition to the hilt.⁵⁷ It announced that as an interim measure it would firmly quell disorder in the Holy Land; prohibit all land transactions which might prejudice the success of partition; and restrict total Jewish immigration to 8000 persons for the eight months August 1937-March 1938. But the avalanche of criticism which followed publication of the partition scheme soon caused the cabinet to waver in its determination. Attacked by leading figures of all parties in both houses of Parliament, the government was forced to abandon its intention of going to Geneva backed by full Parliamentary support. Instead, the House of Commons merely empowered it to submit the idea to the League of Nations and, "after adequate inquiry," to present a definite plan for approval.⁵⁸ At Geneva W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, British Colonial Secretary, urged the Permanent Mandates Commission only to recommend to the League Council that a settlement "on the lines of partition should

be explored as the best and most hopeful solution" of the deadlock.⁵⁹ The Council, in its resolution of September 16, did in fact approve a study of this type.⁶⁰ Thus, while London has gained grudging sanction for elaboration of the details of the partition plan, neither Parliament nor the League is yet formally committed to partition.

Nor has either group in Palestine embraced it with enthusiasm. The Jews, powerless to survive in the Holy Land without British assistance, deny that the mandate is unworkable if wholeheartedly and firmly administered, but have perforce accepted the blow to their national aspirations. Their policy-making organs, although opposing the Royal Commission plan in its present form, have authorized negotiations between their leaders—notably Dr. Chaim Weizmann—and the British government looking toward agreement on a scheme more palatable to Jewish ambitions.⁶¹

The Jews' willingness to negotiate, however, has not been emulated by their opponents. Some moderate friends of the Arab, believing that the only permanent alternative to partition is a British crown colony, urge acceptance of what will after all amount to virtual fulfilment of the McMahon pledge. In their view the Jews, fettered by their narrow boundaries, will eventually seek incorporation in the greater Arab confederation of the future.⁶² But the Arab nationalists have taken an intransigent stand against partition and reiterated their demands in full. In some quarters this position has been regarded as a personal political maneuver of the Mufti, whose hegemony would presumably be at an end in a new Arab State, with the Emir Abdullah of Trans-Jordan as its sovereign and Ragheb Bey Nashashibi as its prime

59. Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes*, pp. 37, 38.

60. For text, cf. League of Nations, *Minutes of the Ninety-Eighth Session of the Council*, September 16, 1937, p. 3.

61. *The New Palestine* (New York), September 3, 1937, p. 2. The revised plan is to be submitted to subsequent sessions of the Zionist Congress and the Council of the Jewish Agency for their approval. Jewish leaders extravagantly estimate that under certain circumstances 2,000,000 Jews may be settled in the Jewish State in the next 20 years. Jews would view partition with more favor provided that the new, Jewish quarter of Jerusalem were made a Jewish enclave; that the new State's boundaries were extended southward in the Negeb to increase the area of possible colonization; that a definite term were fixed for Britain's "temporary" retention of control of the mixed towns; that the Jews were permitted to complete the construction of their own port at Tel Aviv; and that the safety of the Jewish hydroelectric plant on the Jordan and the Dead Sea potash concession were guaranteed.

62. H. St. J. B. Philby, "The Arabs and the Future of Palestine," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), October 1937, pp. 156ff. Partition would be less distasteful to the Arabs if northern Galilee, with its predominantly Arab population, were retained by the Arab State, which would thus gain an outlet to the sea at Acre. The Jewish State might be compensated by giving it additional territory in the south (Negeb).

55. *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 394, 395; Great Britain, Colonial Office: *Palestine, Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom*, Cmd. 5513 (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1937).

56. Statement of W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes*, pp. 17, 18.

57. Earl Peel, "The Report of the Palestine Commission," *International Affairs* (London), September-October 1937, p. 761; *The Times*, July 8, 1937.

58. Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, *Official Report*, vol. 326, no. 150, July 22, 1937.

minister.⁶³ This view disregards the evidence of slowly growing Arab nationalist cohesion, emphasized by the representations of Iraq and Egypt against partition at London and Geneva, and by uncompromising resolutions in the same sense adopted by a so-called Pan Arab Congress recently held at Bloudan, Syria.⁶⁴

Whatever the wisdom of the Arab position, the widespread reluctance to give formal approval to the partition plan is undoubtedly due to the fact that as a solution it fairly bristles with difficulties. From the point of view of the Jews it drastically curtails Palestine's potentialities as a haven for victims of persecution in return for the grant of a largely illusory sovereignty.⁶⁵ Although the Arabs gain as much as could possibly be conceded to them under present circumstances, since the Jews can scarcely be expelled, they may complain with some justice that the Jews have received the most fertile portion of Palestine, the British the most holy, and the Arabs the most barren. Damaging criticisms may also be levelled at the details of the Royal Commission's scheme. Almost 47 per cent of the population of the Jewish State will consist of Arabs; three-quarters of its land will be Arab-owned. A purely Jewish State with Hebrew as the only language and Jews as the only officials is inconceivable under such circumstances. For the Arab world this area will be an important focus for irredentist sentiment.⁶⁶ Arabs ancestrally rooted in the most fertile and prosperous portion of the region will not willingly move to arid areas in which land development possibilities have not yet been determined. The Jewish State will have a sea frontage of 80 miles and a land frontier of 200, crossed by hundreds of roads and paths, with railways winding back and forth across the border. Adequate control of customs and immigration will thus be virtually impossible. Strategically the Jewish State, a narrow strip bisected by an alien corridor, is a monstrosity. At one point it will be less than nine miles wide, with hills immediately beyond the border as fertile breeding-ground for brigandage which might invite retaliation. The inevitable friction may even lead to war, particularly if Britain should become involved in other

regions. Except for Tel Aviv, no town of importance remains under the control of the Jewish State. The Commission, as one authority puts it, seems "to have picked out all the most awkward provisions of the Peace Treaties of Versailles, and to have put a Saar, a Polish Corridor and half a dozen Danzigs and Memels into a country the size of Wales."⁶⁷

The partition plan, moreover, does nothing to dispel the accusation, often heard in Left-wing circles, that Britain has not been averse to continued discord in a crucial strategic area where it might apply the maxim "divide and conquer" to advance its own imperialist interests.⁶⁸ While there is no direct evidence to support this contention, it is obvious that Britain's grip on the territory will be fully maintained. British control of cities, pipe lines, communications, harbors, customs and Arab finances vitiates the sovereign independence with which the partition pill is coated. A Jewish State indefensible by its own resources could scarcely meet the Arab thrust toward the sea without British support—support which might equally safeguard the northern flank of the Suez Canal.⁶⁹ In an enclave created to protect the sanctity of the holy places, Britain is to retain Palestine's chief railway junctions, barracks and aerodromes. Haifa, one of the few potential first-class naval bases in the Eastern Mediterranean, will be governed indefinitely by the British. Akaba, also retained by the mandatory, possesses great strategic value as a Red Sea strong point and the possible terminus for a canal parallel to the Suez.⁷⁰

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTITION

If Britain is to carry out its responsibilities as a mandatory power, it must seek to create the Arab-Jewish understanding without which neither Jews nor Arabs can exploit the full potentialities of Palestine, whether divided or not. It is possible that the only hope for mutual tolerance rests in partition as a prelude to reciprocal cooperation without fear of domination by either party. Partition, however, as an almost irreversible process fraught with the gravest dangers, should be a last resort, not a

63. *The Times*, July 14, 16, 1937; *New York Times*, July 25, 1937.

64. On the importance and significance of the congress, cf. *Great Britain and the East*, September 23, 1937, p. 431; *Palestine and Transjordan*, September 18, 1937, pp. 1, 2; *Palestine Review*, September 17, 1937, p. 384. For Egypt's protest at Geneva, cf. *The Times*, September 20, 1937.

65. For statements that the plan is unfair to the Jews, cf. speech of L. S. Amery, Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, *Official Report*, cited, cols. 2286ff.

66. Herman L. Weisman, *The Future of Palestine: An Examination of the Partition Plan* (New York, 1937).

67. Viscount Samuel, "Alternatives to Partition," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1937, pp. 143ff; Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, *Official Report*, vol. 106, no. 94, July 20, 1937, cols. 625ff.

68. Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, *Official Report*, vol. 326, no. 149, July 21, 1937, cols. 2356ff.

69. For the strategic significance of Palestine in the Mediterranean and as a key point on the route to the East, cf. Popper, "Strategy and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean," cited.

70. Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, *Official Report*, vol. 126, no. 94, July 20, 1937, col. 621; no. 95, July 21, 1937, cols. 801, 815, 817; Philby, "The Arabs and the Future of Palestine," cited.

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hastily imposed settlement. Confronted with a Solomon's judgment, it is conceivable that both parties might find agreement possible. Pleas by British members of Parliament for a round table conference consequently deserve the support of the British government.

A few Jews, agreeing that Britain cannot continue indefinitely to impose the mandate on the Arabs, are already prepared to sacrifice Zionist national ambitions, if a rapprochement can thus be effected. They envisage the possibility of a federal, bi-national state in which the Jews would agree that over a given period their numbers should not exceed a specific percentage of the entire population—perhaps 40 per cent.⁷¹ Several Arab leaders, one a representative of the Arab Higher Committee, have expressed their willingness to negotiate with the Jews on the formation of such a state, provided always that the Arabs retained effective political control.⁷² On a purely rational basis this solution undoubtedly offers better hopes for success than the fruits of the artificial and cramped national systems proposed by the British. In a realistic sense, however, it appears scarcely practicable. Zionists scorn it; mutual distrust would nullify its accomplishments; clashing nationalist aspirations heightened by differences in social advancement and philosophy would invite conflict. Unfortunately, too, Jews have reason to distrust their fate as a minority in an Arab State.⁷³

Even if this solution is not feasible, the Permanent Mandates Commission believes no advantage will be gained by the immediate creation of two new independent states, both of which would find it exceedingly difficult if not impossible to stand alone. A better approach to the problem, it feels, would be afforded by either of two courses. First, a system of "provisional cantonization" might be established for a transition period under which both territorial divisions would possess powers virtually coextensive with those they would enjoy under partition, including the control of immigration. Under this plan they would regulate such matters as defense, foreign affairs, and customs policy through a central body on which both were equally represented, with the mandatory power presiding.⁷⁴ Alternatively, the two new entities might be entirely separated from each other, with Britain assuming two mandates, each to be retained until the

unit in question demonstrates its ability to stand alone.⁷⁵ Either solution—especially the first—provides a breathing spell for gradual adjustment to new circumstances, instead of subjecting the two states to the shock of immediate independence. The possibility, however unlikely, remains that the Jews may abandon their more extreme nationalism, and the Arabs moderate theirs, to avoid the political absurdity to which these forces have given rise in the Levant.⁷⁶ The spectacle of six entities—Syria, the special régime of Alexandretta, the Lebanese Republic, the Jewish State, the British enclave and the Arab State—along a coastal strip only 400 miles in length might well give pause to the most violent partisan. The political intrigues and economic hardships fostered by the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the war may be repeated here on a smaller but not less intense scale.

The opportunity to put Britain's motives to the test has now arrived. Following the assassination of Lewis Y. Andrews, District Commissioner of Galilee, by Arab terrorists on September 26, 1937, the government took unprecedented measures to combat lawlessness. Prominent Arab leaders were deported or exiled; others were taken into custody; the Arab Higher Committee was declared illegal. The Mufti, deposed from the presidency of the Supreme Moslem Council, fled to the Lebanese Republic. A new wave of disorder inaugurated on October 14 was met by determined government reprisals. Britain appears to be veering toward a policy of resolute action against terrorist activities—which, according to many observers, had in the past been encouraged by the government's weakness in the face of violence. But, ironically, the firmness formerly demanded to make the mandate workable may, by its application at this juncture, hasten the demise of the mandate régime. The Mufti's power seems to be broken, unless the government relents; but his offices and their perquisites may be turned over to extremist adherents of partition rather than supporters of comprehensive Arab-Jewish cooperation.⁷⁷ Now that a break has been made in the intransigent Arab front, conditions appear extraordinarily favorable for general reconsideration of the whole situation.

71. Proposal of Viscount Samuel, in "Alternatives to Partition," cited; letter of Judah Magnes, *New York Times*, July 18, 1937.

72. Interview with Adil Arslan, *New York Times*, August 17, 1937; H. I. Kitibah, *ibid.*, August 29, 1937; letter of Jamaal Hussein, *New Statesman and Nation* (London), July 24, 1937, p. 142.

73. Cf. testimony of the Mufti, *Minutes of Evidence*, cited, p. 298.

74. Mr. Ormsby-Gore has stated that while the government endorses the Royal Commission's objections to cantonization as a permanent solution, it might contemplate such an arrangement as a transitional measure. Permanent Mandates Commission, *Minutes*, pp. 190, 191.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

77. Arabs maintain that the new political leaders, whoever they may be, will be forced by terrorists to continue the Mufti's uncompromising policy if they value their lives.